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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2521
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2689
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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR, SCA/PAB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
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SUBJECT: PRT/PANJSHIR: U/S VISITS TEAM, MEETS GOV.

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1.SUMMARY: A State Department delegation, led by U/S Fore (M), visited Panjshir, Afghanistan, to see the PRT, talk with its members, hear briefings on PRT issues, tour Massouds tomb, and meet the Governor. After warmly welcoming the group, the Governor: Offered his personal commitment to the security of the PRT; stated the PRT enjoyed a close working relationship with him and a smooth interaction with the Panjshiris; posited a common strategic outlook between the U.S. and Panjshir forged in the struggle against the Soviets and then the Taliban; expressed interest in exploring a partnership with West Virginia; and cited three sectors where Panjshir would welcome outside investment. End Summary.

2. The State delegation, visiting Panjshir April 23, comprised Henrietta Fore, Under Secretary for Management; Edward Alford, NEA/SA Executive Director; Scott Gallo, Deputy Regional Director NEA/SA for Diplomatic Security; and Maria Brewer, Special Assistant to the U/S. Representing Embassy-Kabul were Rosie Hansen, Management Counselor; Tom Praster, Director of the PRT Office; Sebron Toney, Y, head of management in the PRT Office; and Joe Ferrero, Control Officer. COL Marvin Schlatter, head of Task Force Tiger at Bagram, also attended.

PRT issues

¶3. Members of the entire PRT greeted the U/S upon her arrival at the PRT office facility, where she had a chance to hear their impressions of work in Panjshir. She then toured the 10-room facility and participated in briefings on PRT matters. The Director of the Embassy PRT section provided an overview of the twenty-three PRTs throughout the country and explained the nature of the NATO/ISAF transition. Turning to Panjshir, PRTDIR outlined the unique structure of the Panjshir PRT, lauded the reach-back support at the Embassy in Kabul and Airfield in Bagram, and offered assessments of local officials and issues.

Gubernatorial views

¶4. Governor Bahlul gave the delegation a warm welcome at his office. In response to the U/S on security, the Governor said he was personally committed to ensuring the safety of the PRT now that it had opened its facilities in the valley. He recalled the founding of the PRT in November 2005 and said it was now well established. He described his close working relationship with the various interagency members of the team. The PRT, he said, was an active presence in the valley; it worked at the grassroots level in the villages. The interaction with the Panjshiris was proceeding well. Villagers, he said, sensed that the PRT respected their religious practices and traditional way of life. Further, they saw with their own eyes the tangible progress initiated by the PRT through a host of projects.

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Strategic commonalities

¶5. The U.S. and Panjshir, the Governor stated, were linked by a common strategic outlook. Both had joined forces to oppose the Soviets and then the Taliban. Both suffered at the hands of the same enemy in September 2001 when we lost our great reat leader and you lost the Twin Towers. At this point, the Governor gestured to the portrait of Massoud, hanging next to that of President Karzai on the office wall. (Note: During the visit, the delegation viewed old Soviet tanks that the Mujahideen, under the leadership of Massoud, had captured in the 1980s. The program returned to the Massoud theme at its conclusion, when the group visited the tomb of the Panjshiri who fell to assassins on September 9, 2001. End Note.)

Political opinions

¶6. The U/S, noting the inclusion in the meeting of the three women members of the Provincial Council, asked about the political role of women in Panjshir. The Governor said women were just now assuming political responsibilities there. He wanted to advance their careers, but at an appropriate pace. Recalling his days as a Mujahideen commander, he said he had never ordered an unprepared soldier into battle. Likewise, he did not wish to place undue expectations on the women members of the Council. In the long run, he concluded, education was critical to prepare women for political and administrative careers.

¶7. Picking up on the U/S reference to a recent

visit at the Embassy in Kabul of four U.S. governors, the Panjshiri Governor expressed his gratitude for the chance to exchange views. He was, he said, most intrigued by his counterpart from West Virginia. The two had agreed to stay in touch, explore a partnership and perhaps someday visit one another in their respective homes.

Economic needs

18. Later, over lunch, the Governor spoke about the rudimentary state of development in the valley. He cited three areas in which Panjshir had natural advantages that, with proper investment, might lead to job generation and economic growth: water bottling, tourism promotion and gemstone extraction.

Bio info

19. The Governor also touched on his family life. He said he had his hands full in raising his five children, three girls and two boys; the oldest being a 16-year-old daughter, the youngest, a 4-year-old boy. He estimated his official family that is, his staff at around thirty-five. He lamented that

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his gubernatorial duties prevented him from spending much time with his family.

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